

Dateline DHMH

Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

A Message from the Secretary

Although September is the last month of summer, we remain in the peak season for West Nile virus (WNV). And it has already been quite a season — 14 of the 24 jurisdictions in Maryland have seen WNV activity.

By mid-August, we reported on 221 birds infected with the virus. Although crows are again the primary species affected by the disease, we have found positive blue jays, grackles, and several other species.

We have also identified 24 positive mosquito pools. Two contained the Asian Tiger mosquito, a species that is active in the daytime. Culex mosquitoes, the primary West Nile virus carriers in Maryland, are typically active at dawn and dusk.

Even though this is the fourth year of WNV activity in the United States, it continues to grab headlines. This is due primarily to its spread to other regions of the nation and a resulting increase in the number of human illnesses and deaths.

And while we have no *confirmed* cases of illness among humans in Maryland this year, the escalating number of human infections in other regions of the country makes our surveillance system all the more important, because it tells us where the virus is active in the state.

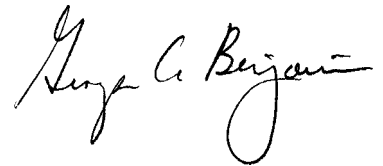
Many people have wondered if the drought has lessened the impact of WNV in Maryland. The quick answer is no.

Mosquitoes that carry the virus are 'container' breeders — they need very little water to reproduce. So a puddle gathering in a roof gutter, or a dog's water bowl, or a garbage can top that holds water, can easily support an environment in which mosquitoes breed.

This is where you can help. Be vigilant about emptying outdoor containers that hold water. Remove standing water from back yard toys. Refresh the bird bath twice a week. Fix dripping faucets. Turn over wheelbarrows, wagons and carts when they are not in use.

Take steps to protect yourself when you are outside, especially at dawn and dusk. Avoid unnecessary outdoor activities during these periods. If you have to be outside, wear light clothing, long pants, long-sleeved shirts and a hat. Use mosquito repellants according to the instructions.

All of these common-sense tips will help lessen exposure to WNV for you, your family and neighbors. More information about West Nile virus is available on the DHMH Web site at www.dhmh.state.md.us. Click on the West Nile virus link under the 'Hot Issues' heading.



Dr. Joseph Receives Lifetime Achievement Award

Laboratories Administration Director Dr. J. Mehzen Joseph was recently presented with the **2002 Lifetime Achievement Award** by the Association of Public Health Laboratories. During the award presentation, it was said that Dr. Joseph has "extraordinary vision" and is "always ready to spend his time, energy and experience in public health (to) make a difference for others." It was further noted that he "always responded to challenges, stepped forward to participate significantly for his professional organizations as well as his health department, and has always done a commendable job in whatever endeavor he has been involved."

Dr. Joseph's highly distinguished 45-year public health career has been spent with the Laboratories Administration where he

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Dr. Joseph Receives Award

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continues to serve as Director, a position he has held since 1977. He served as Assistant Director for 15 years prior to his appointment as Director. Between 1987 and 1997, he held dual positions of State Epidemiologist and laboratories director.

"Joe Joseph's contributions to public health are immeasurable," said Dr. Benjamin. "This award is a testimony to his 45 years of service to the people of Maryland, the nation and the world. I can not think of any individual who is more deserving of this award."

Among the significant contributions he has made are authoring or co-authoring nearly 100 publications, as well as playing a key role in the development of major policy initiatives. In addition, he has served as president of professional organizations and has acted as chairman of several committees and review panels.

Among the many publications, Dr. Joseph reported on an epidemic of Type 3 paralytic poliomyelitis in Baltimore in 1960 (*Public Health Reports*, 1962) and he described the efficacy of mumps vaccine (*Pediatrics*, 1966). The 1960 polio outbreak involved 124 cases and led to the development of the laboratory's virology service, the first of its kind in the state.

He conducted research on the effects of chronic exposure to low levels of lead in 1973 and, in 1986, participated as a co-chair of the first state laboratories consensus conference on serology. This conference was a milestone in the efforts to develop valid serologic testing methods for human retroviruses such as HIV.

He has been a major contributor through field studies, research and policy development on many issues, including diagnosis of Lyme disease, Legionnaire's disease, hepatitis D and toxoplasmosis; screening for chlamydia, alpha-fetoprotein (to detect Down Syndrome), and rabies immunology; HIV testing; and personnel standards and quality assurance.

Dr. Joseph served two consecutive terms as president of the Association of Public Health Laboratories, and as president of the Maryland Epidemiological Society. He was secretary of the American Society for Microbiology for 10 years, and during that period, served on the publication board for the *Journal of Virology*, *Journal of Microbiology* and the *Journal of Applied and Environmental Microbiology*.

He also served as the chairman of the U.S. National Committee / National Academy of Sciences, International Union of Microbiological Societies.

Prior to this award, he had been presented with the Barnett L. Cohen Distinguished Award in Microbiology in 1977 and the American Public Health Association Difco Award in 1985.



Dr. Joseph (center, seated), with (from left) Arlene Stephenson; Dr. Georges C. Benjamin; Scott Becker, Executive Director of the Association of Public Health Laboratories; Katherine Kelley, Director of the Connecticut Public Health Laboratory; and Linda Stahr.

Let Color Be Your Guide

Choose your fruits and vegetables by their color during September, which is **5 A Day Month**, then continue for each month of the year!

Eating red, white, and blue, as well as purple, orange and green fruits and vegetables provides a mix of vitamins, minerals, and phytochemicals (pronounced fight-o-chemicals). Phytochemicals are substances found only in plants that promote good health and help your body fight disease.

Let color be your guide:

RED — Deep red or bright pink fruits and vegetables help reduce the risk of several types of cancer, including prostate cancer. Other red fruits and vegetables, such as strawberries, raspberries, and beets help control blood pressure and protect against diabetes-related circulatory problems.

WHITE — The white vegetables such as garlic, onions, and leeks may lack color, but they're

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Let Color Be Your Guide *Continued*

bursting with powerful phytochemicals, most commonly allicin. Research shows that allicin-containing garlic and onions may help lower cholesterol and blood pressure and increase the body's ability to fight infections.

BLUE/PURPLE — Blue and purple fruits such as blueberries and plums help reduce the risk of diseases including cancer, heart disease, and Alzheimer's, and may even slow down the aging process.

ORANGE — Deep orange and bright yellow fruits and vegetables, such as sweet potatoes, carrots, and pumpkins, reduce the risk of cancer and heart disease, help maintain good eyesight and boost your immune system. Citrus fruits such as oranges, grapefruits, and tangerines work with vitamin C to help keep bodies healthy, strengthen bones and teeth, heal wounds, keep skin healthy, and lower the risk of heart attack.

GREEN — Green leafy vegetables such as spinach, Romaine lettuce, and collard greens, help reduce the risk of cataracts and macular degeneration to maintain good vision. Vegetables such as broccoli and cabbage help protect against prostate cancer. In a recent study, men who ate broccoli and cabbage at least three times a week had a 42 percent reduction in risk of prostate cancer.

To help increase accessibility to Maryland produce for State employees working at the Preston Street State Office Complex, a Farmer's Market will be held every Wednesday through November in front of the 300 West Preston Street building.

For recipes featuring these colorful fruits and vegetables, go to <http://mdpublichealth.org/ocd/cardio/html/five.html>

Editor's Note: Thanks to the staff in the Family Health Administration's Division of Cardiovascular Health and Nutrition for writing this article.

Congratulations to . . .

Janet Freeze, who has been named the DHMH Privacy Coordinator. Janet will provide assistance and guidance throughout the Department on issues relative to the protection of all sensitive information, which includes both hard copy records and electronic/data records.

Calendar of Events

Thursday, September 12 — **Maryland Charity Campaign Kickoff.** O'Connor Building lobby, 11:00 a.m.

Tuesday, September 17 — **Workshop: Self-Management and Recovery Training (SMART Recovery): An Addictions Treatment Alternative;** University of Maryland School of Nursing Baltimore; 8:30 a.m. — 4:15 p.m. \$120, approved for Category I and Category A continuing education credits. Phone 410-706-1839 for more information or visit the school's Web site at www.ssw.umaryland.edu for a full workshop description.

Thursday, September 19 — **Workshop: Elder Law Issues: Asset Management, Health Care Decision Making, and Paying for Long-Term Care;** University of Maryland School of Nursing Baltimore; 8:30 a.m. — 4:15 p.m. \$120, approved for Category I and Category A continuing education credits. Phone 410-706-1839 for more information or visit the school's Web site at www.ssw.umaryland.edu for a full workshop description.

Tuesday, September 24 — **Take Your Loved One to the Doctor Day**, part of a campaign to bring the best health information to African American communities and help African American consumers take charge of their health. Phone Ginny Seyler on 410-767-6513 or Michael Carter on 410-767-6600 for more information.

Friday, September 27 — **Workshop: Dual Diagnosis: Assessment and Treatment;** University of Maryland School of Nursing Baltimore; 8:30 a.m. — 4:15 p.m. \$120, approved for Category I and Category A continuing education credits. Phone 410-706-1839 for more information or visit the school's Web site at www.ssw.umaryland.edu for a full workshop description.

Tuesday and Wednesday, October 1 - 2 — **Blood Drive.** O'Connor Building lobby, 9:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Call Althea Gibson at 410-767-6403 for more information or to schedule an appointment.

Take A Loved One to the Doctor Day

Does the following scenario sound familiar to you? You notice a strange or uncomfortable health symptom . . . maybe it's twinges of back pain, or a cough that just doesn't seem to get better. You know you need to make an appointment with your doctor, but . . . not just yet. It's not interfering too much with your life, so why go to the trouble?

Unfortunately, most people wait until there is an emergency before they see their doctor — and this fact is especially true for African Americans. However, health care professionals urge people to recognize the value of preventive care.

"Take a Loved One to the Doctor Day," scheduled for Tuesday, September 24, is a collaborative effort between the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and ABC Radio to raise awareness about the importance of preventive care. It has been developed to encourage individuals to see a health care professional on that day, or at least make an appointment on that day or during that week.

Participating in "Take a Loved One to the Doctor Day" is easy. Just identify a family member or friend who hasn't been to the doctor lately, and make an appointment for them. Then, take them to the appointment. Or, if you haven't been to the doctor in awhile, consider yourself a loved one and make an appointment for yourself.

Local health departments, civic groups and businesses all over Maryland are planning activities such as health fairs, forums and screenings. To find out what's going on in your community, or to get campaign information and materials including a free tool kit to help organize events, call 1-800-444-6472. Or, visit www.healthgap.omhrc.gov.

The day is part of a larger campaign designed to focus on the gap between the health of African Americans and the general population. "Closing the Health Gap," also developed by the collaborative agreement between DHHS and ABC Radio, aims to educate African Americans and challenge them to change unhealthy behaviors.

The campaign offers lifestyle tips and information on local sources of health care via ABC Radio's 240 Urban Advantage network affiliates. In Maryland, statistics reflect national numbers in terms of poorer health status for African Americans. For example, African Americans in Maryland experience higher overall cancer incidence and mortality rates than whites. African American men have three times the death rate from prostate cancer when compared to white men.

The top four causes of death in Maryland, cardiovascular disease and stroke; cancer; pulmonary diseases; and diabetes, all affect a disproportionate number of African Americans.

Help close this health gap. Take advantage of "Take a Loved One to the Doctor Day."



Editor's Note: Thanks to Tara Snyder, Community Health Educator in the Center of Health Promotion, Education and Tobacco Prevention, for writing this article.



STATE OF MARYLAND

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